# AT OXFORD

BY B.W. HENDERSON

WITHDRAWN

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# AT OXFORD

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE LIFE AND PRINCIPATE OF THE EMPEROR NERO

CIVIL WAR AND REBELLION IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

AT INTERVALS

# AT OXFORD

## AND OTHER POEMS

BY

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## AT OXFORD

AUTUMN again at winter's call is speeding,
Decking her path with crimson and with gold.
Her ripened fruit she gathers, little heeding
All we had hoped for when the year grew old.

Yonder round pinnacle and tower wheeling
The rooks make brief and melancholy call;
And softly, as some secret grief revealing,
The robin sings from ivy-clustered wall.

To-morrow sees our tide of life returning,
Flooding old ways anew with eager youth;
Hope, strength, ambition, resolution burning
To have the mastery in strife for truth.

But now the surge sounds faint and distant, seeming
This evening-tide to draw to lowest ebb;
And Memory with shadows weaves her dreaming:
Shot through with colours bright and grey her web.

Half-seen the pathway, rock and mountain cleaving;
Sombre the crags which guard the castle fast
Where, grave, majestic, kindly, dwells she, weaving
In dim bare wind-swept chamber from the past.

---

Brother Marlburians, comrades loyal ever
To school and college, linked to me as friends,
Earnest in play and valiant in endeavour—
Surely God cherishes whom alone He spends!

One from the threshold of a full life's measure,
Summoned by death to pass to the unknown,

Offered his sacrifice, long-drawn pain for pleasure,
Fared with a smile forth to the dark alone.

One by the shores of Tropic lake and ocean
Joyously gave of manhood's days the best,
Leaning on Christ in passion of devotion
Won from his Lord the martyr's crown and rest.

---

Youth in its happiness, heedless of sorrow,
Fashioning dreamings and scornful of fears,
Yesterday's promise, forgotten to-morrow,
Youth is the tapestry woven of years.

Once with their laughter the college was ringing;
Theirs once to strive for its honour and fame;
Theirs in its Chapel to worship and, singing,
Glorify God and rejoice in His name.

All here are knit to the ages before them,
Fashioned and shaped by their working and plan,
Hand on to others the task, and implore them,
Sons of the College, they too play the man.

Ah, could but love from its fetters be parted,
Bidding defiance to space and to time,
How would they muster, the lads eager-hearted,
Answer the roll-call from every clime.

What though ensnared by some task never-ending
We may forget those who pass from our ken;
What though the duty of life and its spending
Prison their thoughts to the labours of men;

Springtime for sowing: though harvesting tarry
Surely the reaper hath joy of past days;
Back to the city of Youth shall he carry
His fruits for her glory, his deeds for her praise.

## A DOUBT

### (Or an Apologia?)

"Num his continetur salus reipublicæ?"

WE ponder over manuscripts and peer
into antiquities;
We ask if one authority with all the rest
agrees;
We plod along the stony ways of centuries
all dim to us;
Does the health of the Republic rest on
studies such as these?

When faintly from the darkness where in
slums of dirt and misery
In pitiless enslavement man must drain
of life the lees,
We may hear the children crying, if at
times we idly hearken—
Can the Country in her peril turn for
aid to such as these?

Hearken idly: for how sorry is the help
that we could offer;
Our thoughts are with philosophy and
language, if you please;
And if Mammon rides triumphant over
boyhood's health and happiness,
What use a student's protest on behalf
of such as these?

And all the while in India, in Africa, in
Canada,
Wherever man is working in our Empire
overseas,
The youngsters who have been with us,
have learnt with us, have played
with us,
They live their lives apart from us 'mid
problems such as these.

Or lads we loved and cherished (though
they never dreamt it of us),
Straight open-hearted schoolboys, quick
to admire or tease,
The friends of school and College days,
they pass and leave us wondering
Why we should tarry longer when death
claims such as these.

There's a barren barren desert of indulgence, sport, and pleasure,
Where the longer dwell the sojourners the colder is the breeze:
But we for all our learning, our questing, our teaching,
Are we truly any wiser than the multitude of these?

But Plato pleads sagaciously that "each man to his labour"
Makes the whole machine run smoothly to the joy of him who sees.
Nor sympathy nor intellect can bring all men to Paradise;
Why should we be tormented by questionings like these?

Yet when the toil is over and the lamp of life burns dimly,
I wonder what will cheer us: will repose and learnèd ease?
Or the voice of One who cryeth, though our souls be let and hindered,
"Inasmuch as ye have done it to just one, the least of these"?

## FOR JOY THAT A MAN ——

DAWN, hard merciless dawn, and a wintry light on the city
And hurrying steps of the boy, toiling for home and for bread;
Boy-brother, sturdily loyal, hungry, yet asking not pity
But work and some measure of joy ere boyhood be sped.

What will you make of him, England, this son of yours, "heir to the Ages"?
Ages of Faith, maybe? Is it Faith that passes him by
With a word of praise on the lips, but with eyes intent on the pages
Of ledger of Profit and Loss? Why listen the children's cry?

Where else is your duty, England, the task of a surety the Mother's,
Aged, careworn, and wise, "Empress from Tropic to Pole"?

Empress? And here at your feet is your
son in his toiling for others,
Little ones, lest they go hungry. Is it
preaching must save his soul?

"Not walls and not bulwarks but men"!
Are not these the men for your saving?
But God send the need come slowly if
you tend them no better, your sons.
Ill housed, ill fed, ill apparelled—will you
call these lads to go braving
Peril and wounding and death 'mid the
roar of the enemy's guns?

Yes, they will answer the call, but alas for
the mothers who bare them,
And woe for the weary days and the
desolate nights, as they roam
Unloved, unguarded, unheeded, for hunger
and sin to ensnare them,
The wastage of life, your children, Eng-
land, sons of the home!

Boyhood resolute, daring, defiant of danger
and sorrow,
Boyhood following hard in the steps of
those perished before:

What will you make of him, England, this
lad who must guard you to-morrow?
For the son who is lost God gives you,
Mother, no more.

## THE LAST DAY

DESOLATE gloom of a sunless day
(Ah, but the waves are breaking coldly!)
Can there be light where he passed away?
(Ah, but he faced death's terror boldly!)

Out from the pain thou bringest release?
(Hearken the cry of the sea-bird's wailing!)
But how to fatherless children peace?
(What profit to mend a grief by railing?)

Let the storm rage and be done with pity!
(See o'er the rocks the cruel foam leaping!)
Back to the struggle and fret of the city!
(Leave we our dead to God's quiet keeping.)

Golden the sunset : the long day is done,
(Ever at evening the sea finds rest !)
The passion of sorrow for ever is gone,
(We know nothing and God knows best).

## SURRENDER

### I

HAST thou a song, O singer,
A song of the happier Past—
When man was valiant, nor shunned to slay,
And the rush-strewn hall in the fire-light gay
Re-echoed with laughter and minstrel's lay,
And youth was aflame for love and the fray,
And maidens' hearts beat fast?
The present we hate, for blood runs cold,
All hearths are ashen grey to behold,
When men are all selfish seekers for gold:
Methinketh the world is waxen old
And the wind blows drearily over the wold.
Is there courage in youth?
Bid him stay:
For the days of the heroes are long since dead
Now that "Give us this day another man's bread"
Is the prayer of each heart all secretly said:

Let the hungry go weep, we will raise our
head
A' top of our fellows; for mercy is fled
From the day
When Mammon is Master of truth.

## II

Nay—there is pity enough
In measure pressed down, running o'er.
Why malign ye the age of new lore,
Of the franchise, the Trust, and the rough
Whose wrongs we must hasten to heal
And demand of his victim he feel
Like zest for his wrongdoer's weal?
How idle the fears
That the Present no Chivalry knows,
No honour rewards, praise bestows
On those whom its fancy admires
Though little it reck of its sires!
There are tears,
Tears for the rogue, the traitor, the
thief,
Tears in plenty for advertised grief.
Is the nation at war?
See the gibes and rejoicings at English
defeat!

And the blood of the English as dirt in the street,
While the foe for forgiveness we beg, and entreat
That he let us defame our own courage, our fleet,
And our army afar.

III

Why is the singer dumb,
That he sings not the song of the Present?
See his hearers thronging: they come
From the ruined village, the slum,
Vice, virtue, all shivering, numb
With the biting of rage are some;
But others are flaunting in finery's shame
Revelling, feasting, girding at blame,
The harlot, the temptress, the wanton, no name
Of despair and reproach but they gaily acclaim.
For God maketh His sun to shine all the same
On the evil and good.
So here for the minstrel's song is food:
No ballad antique of creeds decaying,
Of faiths outworn and past all praying,

Of children's glee when the world went
Maying,
Of mariners' quests, of knights arraying
For the Cross and its war with the
Crescent,
Themes stripped from Time's loom.

## IV

Let the dead Past bury its dead.
Sing us this song instead,
Of the hurrying flood of this fast-rushing
life
O'erwhelming us all 'neath the waters of
strife,
Boy, maiden, and lover, child, husband, and
wife:
The song of To-day with its hopes
and its fears.
For have we not suffered our burden
of years?
Let our dead Past bury its dead!
We have fought and striven and
shed
Our life-blood the wide world
through:
Whence again then to dare and to
do?

Why call us anew
Our souls with strength to endue,
To be strong with the power of a living faith
To welcome hardship and mock at death ?
Nay—lull us to rest.

Lull us to rest : we are past our prime :
Let us garner our husks 'gainst the coming time
Of our Winter's eld : no song sublime
Should wake our hearts in the minstrel's rhyme,
And sleep is best

## SORRISE

SORRISE, Sorrise,
Where tarriest thou, Sorrise?
There's a gleam on the tarn in the dark of the hills,
And dim through the dusk of the morning the rills
Shine white as they leap; night is past and its ills.
Awake, Sorrise.

Now fast down the fell side the shadows in flight
Haste back to their home in the bosom of night,
And the mountains are bathed in a glory of light;
O haste thee, Sorrise.

The bracken's aglow with its russet and gold,
Now day wakes in laughter o'er hamlet and fold;

There is joy in the hills, joy to-day as of old.
Awake, Sorrise.

See the dragon-fly darting all amber and
green,
A jewel of splendour, the rushes between ;
No day could be fairer of all that have
been :
Comest thou not, Sorrise ?

---

Sorrise, Sorrise,
Mindest thou not, Sorrise,
The long summer day when we wandered
forth free,
God's sky blue above us, an infinite sea
Of rejoicing embracing us two, you and me,
Sorrise ?

So we climbed through the heather the steep
of High Raise,
Where around and beneath us, spread out
to our gaze,
Lay mountain and valley, all bright for
God's praise :
See-est thou not, Sorrise ?

Far away to the eastward below us there gleamed
Winandermere's waters: a vision they seemed
Of the river of crystal of God's own redeemed:
When comest thou, Sorrise?

Now autumn is monarch and summer is flown;
Why wilt thou not hearken? I stand here alone;
Yet a little, night falls, and the journey is done,
Sorrise.

---

Sorrise, Sorrise,
Bethink thee, Sorrise,
How we dreamed of the son God should give us, that he
In his beauty of boyhood these mountains should see,
And we stand here together in worship, we three
Together, Sorrise.

And the strength of the hills should be his,
and the song
Of the rivers inspire with courage and strong
Loyal faith for his battle with sin and with
wrong;
Rememberest thou not, Sorrise?

If death be the ending, the pageant of
earth
The glory of sunrise, each day's happy
birth,
The spring and its promise, how mocking
their mirth;
Comest thou never, Sorrise?

The long day is ending: its hours are fled;
I am lonely, alone with my God and my
dead;
In the infinite stillness God's mercy is shed,
And thou comest, Sorrise.

## IN VAIN?

WILL you not tell me
What it means to love you?
Once I thought it Paradise
In the Heaven above you.

Now to all seeming
Vanished is the vision.
Was it only dreaming?
Earth is still my prison?

Once you smiled upon me
When you bade me follow:
Now the mist clings round me
And the laugh rings hollow.

Love that's born of Springtime—
Can you not remember?—
Why must it perish 'mid
Snows of dim December?

Was is not at Winter that
Vigil and scorning;
Mary at the manger side,
Love born in the morning?

Shall Winter's empery
Rule our kingdom?
Ah, let Love's sun arise,
Presage the Spring come.

Will you not tell me
What it means to love you?
Still it may be Paradise
In the Heaven above you.

## SIR BRANDRETH

SIR BRANDRETH rode fast with his knights at his side
O'er the causeway awash with the incoming tide.

Then spurred he full swiftly to bridge and to gate.
"Sweet Mary have mercy! Who knocketh so late?"

"Now haste thee, sir porter, the gateway unbar:
'Tis Sir Brandreth thy Lord, newly home from the war."

"God keep us, Sir Brandreth; scarce an hour is gone
Thou didst smite on the wicket and pass in alone:

"In the light of the torches thine armour shone red,
Thou didst reel on the threshold as one sore besteđ."

"Thou ravest, sir porter! 'Tis years twain or more
Since I passed o'er the causeway from yonder far shore.

"Go bid Lady Avice and Richard my son"—
"Sir Brandreth, Sir Brandreth, their life's course is run."

Who calleth so loud from the sands through the night?
Now Jesu have pity! The tide's near its height.

Then out laughed Sir Brandreth full loud at the call:
"Bid my wraith then stay dwell in my desolate hall;

"And the Devil's own curse light on castle and bower,
On steed and on rider for aye from this hour!"

"Hark! The fiend cryeth loud" quoth
Sir Brandreth in glee:
"An he lack him his supper, he is welcome
to me."

Sir Brandreth turned sharply his steed, and he rode
Back into the night and the wild rushing flood.

All white to the heavens the billows are tossed.
Sweet Mary have mercy on souls that are lost!

## THE RAILWAY CUTTING

HAREBELL and heather and daisy,
Hearken their call to the dance!
Away with all imps that be lazy;
Moonlight and evening entrance.

Here is broom to be rid of things creepy,
And thyme for the little bare feet:
Poppies so red but so sleepy!
Mallow and campion neat.

Look! The moon's smiling and winking;
Cloudlets go streaming away;
Once she's awake she'll be thinking
It jolly to join in the play.

Time for a change in our measure:
The flowers are dancing themselves:
The goblins are grinning for pleasure:
So quick to it, fairies and elves!

Where the embankment slopes down in the cutting
Hideous monsters affright not a whit!
Let them come raging and shrieking and butting,
Into the bracken we merrily flit.

Poor stupid mortals cooped up in those boxes,
Just as we spy them through windows alight,
Fastened like pheasant chicks fearful of foxes,
Peering so dismally into the night!

Children's pale faces glide by us appealing
(Why! Here's a bee spiked its wing on a thorn!
Bind it up softly for mending and healing)
Come then and dance with us, playmates, till morn.

Hark! Here's the muttering, quivering, rumbling!
Jock-a-Limb 's climbing the top of the post!

Stick to it, Jock-a-Limb, else you'll come tumbling!
Up flies the signal on Jock's nose a'most.

Here's a wee shrew been disturbed from her slumber
Scampering madly, an urchin astride:
Pixies and elves peeping shy without number:
Come on, you fellows! a groat for a ride!

Search for a glowworm to carry our ladies:
Who's for the seaside? Bring quick from our hoard
Under the rowan-tree hid, where the shade is,
Gossamer-wrappings, and see 'em aboard.

Light up the lanterns! Now, elves, take your places!
What? A wren's twitter? The night nearly done?
See! Mortals yawning! What ugly grimaces!
Farewell to our revels: but, oh, they *were* fun.

## ST LEVAN

SURGE and fret of the foam,
Foam of the western sea leaping
In billows charging to shore
With rushing and furious roar,
And manes wind-blown
Of spray wrack-strown,
Raging and hungry with death in their keeping;
Cataracts tossing on high
Till rocks and ramparts and sky
Are lost in a whirling confusion of white
And pale flecked green in the dying light,
Storm of mid-winter ne'er lulling to rest
The heaving of ocean's wild passionate breast,
Greedy, ah greedy, to whelm and destroy
Gaunt hardy mariner, pale weary boy,
Buffeted seaward, drifting to shore,
Where, evermore,

Cruelties of castled and pinnacled rock,
Jaggéd and streaming and glistening, mock
Sailor and helmsman, and savage confound
The cries of despair
That call from their lair
Cormorants glutted with flesh of the drowned:
Ah, shall the ship reach home?

## BY THE CORNISH SEA

THE granite cliffs are cleft by caverns deep;
The purple heather decks the clinging grass
Where castled rocks in sun-bathed dreaming sleep;
Swift o'er the restless sea shadows of hurrying seamews pass,
Crying their wild and ever plaintive note
As spirits of lost mariners in quest,
From cruel reef and perilous ways remote,
Of quiet land-encircled graves where they may be at rest.

Far shores, beyond the meeting-place of day and night,
Oceanus' circling stream, Calypso's caverned isle,
Beyond his ken, defiant of the storm's affright,

Of Laestrygonian horror or Sirens' sweet
alluring guile,
Harvestless wine-dark sea, enchant-
ment-breathing land,
Till green Hermæus' steep the keen
Phæacian hails,
Soft lays the toil-spent warrior on his
long-sought strand,
And hoists anew to catch the favouring
breeze his crimsoned sails.

Perchance here once some black
Sidonian keel
With dark-envisaged treacherous
hardy crew
Half trader and half pirate, at the
appeal
Of fond adventure marked with white the
troubled waters blue,
Seeking the fabled Cassiterides,
Pearls of great price, rich treasures
ocean-born,
Weaving them tales of fancy's melodies,
The Nereids' coronal of song and Triton's
ominous horn.

But hark! The music of soft-ringing
chimes

Is mingled with the surge's deeper note;
The very waves whisper of faery times
When Arthur's chivalry rode forth and giant tyrants smote
In headlong flight beyond the hidden marge
Of Lyonesse, or e'er the heathen rout
Swept down anew with myriad axe and targe
As some wild Scythian horseman, flashing lance and brandished knout.

Then where the din of hideous battle raged
O'er peaceful hamlets, prayer-built lonely cells,
The savage ranged, his blood-thirst unassuaged,
Though in wild tocsin swayed the clamorous and despairing bells,
Till in their last and hopeless agony
The people lifted hands to God in prayer,
Who in His mercy bade the pitying sea
Flood o'er the fragrant thyme-set fields of Lyonesse the fair.

Galleot and galleon, caravel and sloop,
Moving up channel with the flowing tide,
Their ordnance ready trimmed, and at the poop
The embroidered flags of Spain flaunting their challenge proud, defied
The granite cliffs and England's wooden walls,
But soon a lurid night of storm shall see
Yards flying loose, hulls rent, and shattering squalls
Hurling them doom-wards, priest and slave and frustrate chivalry.

As some great cliff its massive crest uprears
Above the fury of the treacherous gale
Where the sea-eagle nests her brood, nor fears
The angry clutching waves which vain her timorous young assail,
So England, Mother, our hearts go out to thee
Calm in thy patience 'mid grim envy's hate,

Ruler and Queen of this our western
sea,
Of strength unshaken, yea of ageless fame
inviolate.

## LAMORNA BAY

THE wraith of the mist round the headland curled
With her winding-sheet for the dead unfurled,
Talons outstretched for the mariner bold,
To clutch him a drownèd corpse and cold,
And fling him below to depths untold;
And the billows on high were madly hurled
In a riotous fury of glee, the day
That the Rolf went down in Lamorna Bay.

Then merrily laughed the storm-king grim
At booty so rich lightly tossed to him,
And his call shrilled over the ocean bed:
"Speed, brothers, speed, for the feast is spread,
And we glut our maws this night on the dead."
As the cry died moaning in caverns dim

From their lairs sprang the fiends all
gaunt and grey
When the Rolf went down in Lamorna
Bay.

But a shaft of light smote quivering home
To the waving weeds and the deep green
gloom;
And the goblin-rout all shuddering flies,
While the mariner sleeps with closèd
eyes
Till the last great day, when the cry
"Arise!"
Shall ring down the vault of Heaven's
dome,
And the sorrowful sea give up her prey,
The dead that were drowned in Lamorna
Bay.

## AT NIGHT

AS some lone watcher through the anxious night
Sees o'er the darkened infinite of sea
Move swiftly by a light on unseen ship
Faring afar to haven long desired
And vanish sudden round the headland dim
Whose outline strikes a blur athwart the stars,
So doth this little life of troubled man
Illumine with faint gleam a moment chos'n
From out eternity's unseen content
Then pass forever to forgotten peace.

## SURGE OF THE SEA

THE "Golden Day" set sail to the west
(O the murmuring song of the surge of the sea)
And they waved her good luck, ay, luck of the best
As she cleared from the harbour 'mid laughter and jest,
And the waves leapt up in answering glee.

The waves leapt up in answering glee
(O the unquiet cry of the surge in the west)
When the "Golden Day" shook her sails out free
And dipped from sight o'er the brim of the sea:
But their hearts were sad that loved her the best.

Their hearts were sad that loved her well
(O the desolate moan of the surge of the sea)

For the wind came chasing the leaping swell
As it chafed and fretted the tossing bell
Ringing of hidden and jaggèd teeth,
All hungry for prey, of the reef beneath
(O flee from the perilous surge, O flee!)

The sun went down in a glory of red
(O the sorrowful call of the surge of the sea)
And darkness arose from its ocean bed,
The darkness that shrouds the lost and the dead:
Now God have mercy on you and me,
And guard us both from the surge of the sea,
The pitiless song of the surge of the sea.

## THE PASSAGE OF LIFE

"BRIGHT morn, summer morn,
Flashing and gleaming
Over the golden corn
While earth lies dreaming,
Strong with our work to cope
Call us untiring,
Child's hope, man's hope,
Courage inspiring."

I sate at edge of an enchanted wood
Where, laughing softly, to the day there ran
A rivulet in happy solitude
Unscathed by footprint of unquiet man;
Beyond, through archèd spaces, mid the oak-trees' shade
The sunlit waters of a far-seen lake displayed
Their shining blue by silent marge which fairy feet had kissed,
And flung their challenge merrily to the wraiths of the mountain mist.

Soon gleeful laughter echoed through
the trees,
And a gay band of children I
espied,
Their tresses loosely floating on the
breeze
With nimble feet mocking the elfin's
pride
In jocund revelry come dancing by the
rill
On sward with bluebell gay and nodding
daffodil,
Or flushing hyacinth chiming gentle bells
in shy delight
To call the timorous dryad to the glade in
pleased affright.

As in old time the master craftsman's
hand
Wrought children's music out of
sculptured stone,
And still all sweetly chants the angelic
band
To harp and psaltery their antiphon
"Laudate Dominum in cithara," again
"In cymbalis laudate" swells the ex-
ultant strain

Till the imprisoned music breaks free from
its marble shrine
As boyish voices heavenward raise their
canticle divine.

---

"Deep noon, ruddy noon,
Hot on the mountains,
Parching the grasses soon,
Quelling the fountains,
Spare thou the burnt soil
Lest all we cherish,
Child's toil, man's toil,
Fruitlessly perish."

Scarce had the children's laughter died
away
And playful Echo stayed her answer-
ing call,
Youth in his strength came riding
sturdily,
With maiden blush and resolute heart
withal;
In quest of war and honour's meed in
haste he spurred
Where beckoning heights and black
stern crags allured;

Though toil be his and peril's threat,
though guile's caress ensnare,
If not to conquer ere life end, yet resolute
to dare.

But now the sun climbed high in
heaven's dome,
The weary flowers bowed their heavy
heads;
As on some rockbound shore the line
of foam
Alone marks Ocean's heaving, as it
spreads
A curving fringe of white the slumbering
cliffs along,
While mariners drift idly and hushed
the billow's song:
So round the forest's vesture dark em-
broidery of light
Ran gleaming, as the path of stars girdles
the brooding night.

Sudden the silence broke, for ringing
mail
With clash of arms resounded through
the glade,
As down the woodland path knight
Percivale,

In armour dint by many a blow arrayed,
Rode swift to right the wrong and evil to redress
In manhood's strong simplicity of hardiness
Before the shadows lengthened and the hurrying daylight fled
Beyond the darkening mountain ridge where the Sangreal shone rose-red.

---

"Cold wind, cruel wind,
Merciless straining,
Hearest not, unkind,
Nature's complaining?
Driving the mist and snow
Swift to obey thee,
Child's foe, man's foe,
When wilt thou stay thee?"

Then stormy evening lit with amethyst
The fronting crags, whose precipices wild
Upsprang in massive armoury, nor wist
Of pity's pleading, stark and unbeguiled,

And o'er the sullen frowning crests the
Imperial moon
Moved stately slow to coming Empery,
and soon
Over reluctant day night flung her mantle
flowing free,
And the voice of the rivers sang her sway
in hidden melody.

Then through the forest greedy Death
came hasting
In likeness of a lean and panting hound,
His avid jaws agape, already tasting
Remembered joys of slaughter and of
wound:
The gnarlèd oaks all shuddering spied
his furtive tread
While chilling blasts from festering
charnel heaps of dead
Smote broken boughs red-flecked and sere
afar in wild dismay
Where gluttonous sped on swooping wing
his talon'd birds of prey.

O hungry death, that followeth life
so fast
And marrest marriage feast with
funeral knell,

Commingling present grief with pleasure past,
Who may thy pitiless hunting bold repel?
I marked thy trackings over barren fell and dale;
The thronging phantoms join thine army of assail;
And shivering Night drew closer yet her heavy sable pall
Lest the angel of doom should sheathe his sword and the ripe ears cease to fall.

---

"Calm eve, quiet eve,
Ere comes the morrow,
Life from its woe retrieve
Burden and sorrow;
Dreaming, thy peace confest,
Lie croft and shieling;
Child's rest, man's rest,
Grant us thy healing."

Long brooded stillness: black it was and dread
As when the seer defied Meremptah's pride

And darkness, shadowless and awful, spread
At Jahveh's bidding over Nilus' tide;
Dark as in Ocean's fathomless unplumbèd deep
The naked rocks Archæan night eternal keep,
Dark as was Chaos' timeless void before God spake the word
And on the waters' face there moved the Spirit of the Lord.

At length a whisper through the forest went,
The herald of the dawn, at whose behest
The veil of darkness in the East was rent,
And, as of old to guide the sacred quest,
Pearl of the Orient silver-set shone out the star.
Crimson and gold, like Seraph bands all dight for war
The rays of morning glancing pierced and smote the distant ridge
Where a stream leapt white in a purple gulf spanned by a rainbow bridge.

Then to the sound of music deep and chant,
The vanquisher of Death and Night, Love came.
All blithely sang the birds; the fragrant plant
And flowers in multitudinous acclaim
Hailed Him as victor: worn and pale his brow, yet glad
With solemn joy which knew nor sorrow left nor shade;
For the song of the redeemèd was the crown of Love's emprise,
And woodland, lake, and mountain, anteroom of Paradise.

---

"Strength of the mountain height,
Torrent-scarred, lonely,
Myriad waters bright
Known to thee only,
Wind's assault, storm's blast,
Bravely defying,
Thine be our strength at last,
Living or dying!"

## EARTH TOKENS

O EARTH, gaunt Earth,
The storm is raging 'neath rent skies,
The bare hill-side is lashed with rain,
The torrent's cry of savage pain
Voices the mountain's agonies;
The hideous darkness mocks the gaze;
The greedy shifting moss ensnares;
The levin-brand that lurid glares
Naught but the naked rock displays.
In night our souls enthralling
And bitterness appalling,
Chasm to chasm calling,
Shall life be worth the striving,
Our toiling, our contriving,
Of any worth?

O Earth, fair Earth,
The wind sweeps o'er thy mountain side,
The pine is mirrored in the lake
And bracken rich and heather make

A joyance gay where dreams abide;
Yonder the road dips o'er the brow,
When purple hills and setting sun
The wanderer warn of journey done,
To hamlet in the vale below.
When all thy soul lies dreaming,
Thy face of heaven seeming,
Thy smile our hearts redeeming,
Shall joy not conquer sighing,
Strength weariness, and dying
Again be birth?

## AT CARLISLE

BEYOND the river's bound, which floweth grey
And desolate towards the lonely sea,
The lights shine faintly out at close of day
From Border lands, where once the rover free
In olden days had shuddered to espy
The Norman's citadel and battlement
Upsoaring grimly to the hostile sky,
Then fearful back his gloomy way he went.

The sombre clouds hang heavy, leaden-hued;
The grey roofs of the ancient town below
Glisten with rain fresh fallen, as imbued
With pity's tears for poverty and woe
Haunting these narrow streets, whose children, pale,
Barefooted, ragged, hungry, noisy, wait

To see if aught men's charity avail
And Dives reck of Lazarus at his gate.

. . . . .

Here once the Highland clansman fierce, too leal
To that unhappy Royal race, whose bane
It was to win men's love and, winning, feel
Such gratitude as squandered it in vain,
Had roamed, now victor, now in panic flight
From Derby with the English following fleet,
And cressets flaring lit the troubled night,
While pipes rang shrilly in that wild retreat.

Then brandished arms despairing menaced God
As, passing by the quiet Minster's shade
Where once their vaunting steps in triumph trod,
They saw the autumn of their hopes displayed;

And where the trees dropt yellowing
leaves they heard
No more the shout of welcome's joyous
cry:
Only the dank and ominous air was stirred
By music's melancholy psalmody.

Like to a vision in a forest dreamt
By northern lakeside, so in haste they
came
A troop of warriors weary, all unkempt,
Fast through the silent town, with angry
shame
Bright burning on their foreheads; and
behind
Meseemed there followed grimly, wreathed
in crape,
A figure ghostly, axe and cord to bind,
Grisly and noiseless, mocking such escape.

. . . . .

Within the Minster walls this lonely
eve,
Which fain would flash to sunset with
their glow
Of rose-red stone, men's busy thoughts
may weave
Texture of fancy's dreams of long ago,

When to the rushing wings of Gabriel,
The maid in adoration lowly bent;
For sudden breaks upon the silence' spell
A boy's soft treble, clear and confident!

O surely Paradise seemed incomplete,
And God lacked somewhat of His perfect joy
Though Seraphim and Cherubim should greet
Their Maker with undying song's employ
In choral grandeur solemn, throbbing deep
Through aisles of Heaven: then the Father smiled
At hearkening earth's voices, and bade keep
Place in His choir for a little child.

. . . . .

Again we pass without the Minster walls;
The windows darken; hushed the voice of prayer;
Of time and hopeless circumstance poor thralls,
Nor yet eternity's fruition share;

When down the street fierce-swept by lashing rain
In sodden garb, yet glad with earnest gaze
Comes to rebuke our little faith and vain
A company of singers to God's praise.

O song of faith in world grown bitter cold,
O trusting hearts that span the ages old,
In yon far Syrian town beside the lake
Where Christ His thronging hearers' thirst did slake
With streams of living water aye, and fed
Their hunger with Himself, of life the Bread,
How would thy faith have bid His anguish cease,
Thy love have found His love, thy trust his peace!

O country far, where we had lost our way
Spending our portion given heedlessly,
Our squandered hours as broken potsherds flung
Remorselessly Time's wastage heaps among,

God all forgotten—when the need was come
Stumbling and faint we turned us back for home;
While we were yet a great way off, the Christ,
Seeing, had pity, and His love sufficed.

## THE FULNESS OF LIFE

FOAMING and wrack of the tide,
Cold light of a wintry sun,
Labour, yesterday's pride,
Ended, yet scarce begun:

White-capped billows that fret
Rocks of a wreck-strewn shore,
Joy that knew not regret
Now lost evermore:

Athwart the surge and the wind
The fisher-bird speedeth alone,
Lonely as soul that has sinned
And reapeth its own.

Vain as beat of the sea,
Empty as moorland mist,
Such the vision of life to me
Until filled by Christ.

Then colours sprang out o'er the deep,
A glory of light lit the foam,
The waves sank softly on sleep,
And the storm-tossed ship came home.

## THE VOICE OF THE HILLS

YONDER the waterfall, child of crag and mountain,
Cleaves the cold mist and from its fetters freed
Leaps bright and clear to plenish pool and fountain
Down to earth's crying, hearkening her need.

Deep in the bosom of the fells its springing,
Rushes and moss its cradle, and for song
Wind's deep rejoicing, down it foameth, bringing
Cleansing for foulness, purity for wrong.

Man in the low land, spent with toil, mistrusting
Whether there be a God to pity pain,
His heaven but gloom, and devils beneath it lusting
For souls and bodies, sold alike for gain:

Refuse and mire, filth and desolation,
Pillars of smoke by day and fire by night,
Guiding the chosen children of the nation
Swift to their promised country of delight:

Ruby and sapphire, emerald resplendent:
Ruby for heart's blood shed of Mammon's slaves;
Sapphire for pride's magnificence ascendent;
Emerald the grass above its victims' graves:

Faint on the horizon, when the eve is falling,
Yet may he mark the purple line of hills,
Hear in the silence, vanished hopes recalling,
Voice of the mountains, music of the rills.

Surely the mountains answer him, confessing
Faithless his weariness craving but release,

"God giveth strength to Man for wrong's redressing,
Then at the last His own reward of peace."

## O FORTUNATOS

"Neque ille
Aut doluit miserans inopem aut invidit habenti."

ONLY the clouds of heaven above them, only the moorland spread below:
What should they know of the city's needs who only the mountains' loneliness know?

---

Down in the lowlands manhood toiling, womanhood grieving, roar and fret,
Hunger and crime and despair their counsellor, wealth and misery, yoke-fellows yet;

Childhood sobbing its wants unheeded; boyhood robbed of its chance of life;
Mammon flinging contemptuous morsels to ruined maiden and shrinking wife;

Riches flaunting on dusty highways ; slime
or stench of the sun-scorched slum ;
Smoke-grimed chimney and reeking alley,
fœtid gutter and noisome gloom :

What is the birthright of England's boy-
hood, Lord of the Manor and King of
the Mart ?
Have you no fields you could give for
their playing ? Have you no pleasures
to give for their part ?

---

Singer belovéd of pasture and hamlet,
ploughshare and vintage and children
and kine,
All the affection and beauty and wonder,
passion and glory of Italy thine :

Thou knewest anger for poverty's suffer-
ing : thou knewest longing for riches
to save
(Ah, if the wealthy would hearken the
crying !) some of thy children from
pain or the grave :

Thou turnedst entrancéd away from the
sobbing, singing thy haven from fury
and fear—

Peace of the countryside, joy of the peasant,
the lowing of cattle, the husbandman's
cheer.

Wouldst thou enchant us, O singer eternal,
here in the silence and calm of the
hills,
In thine all-merciful love for all living
blinding our eyes to humanity's ills?

Could not thy wonderful pity and passion
find other solace for evil and wrong,
Or didst thou leave this the burden of
sorrow to Him who should follow,
the Child of thy song?

Nay, but His voice soundeth faintly, how
faintly! heard 'mid the clanging of
piston and rod:
"Children, how hardly may they that
trust riches seek to inherit the King-
dom of God!"

---

Only the clouds of heaven above them,
only the moorland spread below:
What should they reck of the city's needs
who only the mountains' loveliness
know?

## THE ROSE

THY scent a caress
And thy touch a kiss,
When Love stoops to earth
There is joy at the birth
In heaven no less
I wis.

Red for the glory of pain
Love suffered, and died ;
But white for laughter
Of joy thereafter,
For sunshine through rain
At Eastertide.

## ON CHRISTMAS EVE

THE glow of the sunset yields to eve;
The robin sings
A moment, then hushes, for night to weave
Sad imaginings.

O'er the black of the beechwood gleams a star;
The wind is still,
Lest its moan in the mystical twilight mar
With presage of ill.

Out on the deepening night there glide
Shadows of fear,
As eddies athwart the roll of the tide
By the sandhills drear.

To-morrow is hope for the world? Yet first
Come sorrow and pain;
And the bleached white desert is long athirst,
Athirst for the rain.

To-morrow is joy for the world? Yet see,
What hope of the birth
Of the Joy-Child Christ, when that misery
Broods o'er the earth?

The cradle so dimly seen, one saith,
May be a bier,
For the wings of the desolate Angel of Death
Are passing near.

Dark night of the Timeless, thine embrace
Close wraps us round:
On the drifting and treacherous sand no trace
Of the wanderer found!

Is it for ever in spectral quest
Alone he strays?
Who knows whether life or death be best
This end of days?

Were the tidings of joy in the Angels' song,
Or of grief and loss,
Of friend's betrayal, of bitter wrong,
O babe of the Cross?

To-morrow comes Love to the world, for a Child
Is born, a King?
Canst hear o'er the raging of waters wild
The Birth-bells ring?

Love comes to His own? Do His own at least
Receive Him? Nay—
But—
Children are singing: there is light in the east:
It is Christmas Day.

## A WEST-COUNTRY CAROL

OUR night lay black, a'frowning,
O'er the cruel crags o' the shore,
When the star shone clear
On the manger bare,
Through the open door.

Our waves rushed in, a'foaming,
From the driving storm all wild,
When the Christmas night
In the East was bright
For love o' the Child.

Our sea-birds flew, a'crying
Through the gale adrift with spray,
When Mary prayed
At the cradle head,
Waiting for day.

Hadst come, babe Christ, to our West-land,
The song of the dreaming deep,
And its waves at rest
Would have been the best
To soothe Thy sleep.

Our fisher-lads, a'watching
By the nets at yonder buoy,
Would have sung out clear
As the heavenly choir,
For joy.

## IN EXETER COLLEGE CHAPEL

*The old King:*

I SEE the star gleaming:
It shines as my gold;
'Tis age does the dreaming
In winter's cold.

*The young King:*

I see the star burning:
The gifts that I bring
Glow as the returning
Life in the Spring.

*The Eastern King:*

I see the star setting
In fragrance rose-red;
My myrrh's for forgetting
Night's sorrow dead.

*Cantant pueri:*

Shepherds and Monarchs and Angels, ye throng
Fast to the Star as it sinks in the West;
Haste then with offerings, prayer, riches, song—
Which is the gift shall please Him the best?

Worship ye first, but we children come after;
Yours to bring jewels and frankincense old;
Mother and Child, will ye smile on our laughter,
Take love for rubies and carols for gold?

*Respondent omnes:*

Day may break drearily, life seem but loss;
Christ sends the vision again for one hour:
Prayers rise wearily; riches are dross;
How shall song lose its power?

See, in His garden the flowers are springing:
Say ye "He leaves us; we toil in the wild

Lonely, forsaken"?—Nay, hark to the singing,
Christ newly-born in the joy of each child.

## NEW YEAR'S EVE

SNOW on the hills, and a grey north wind;
A dull sea smoking with wisps of mist;
And a cold sun striving in vain to find
Its way to an earth it long since kissed:

Ah, where is the warmth and the love and desire
Of summer's own home in our land of the West?
Grown chill and old, as the old year's quire
Of song a dirge, and our faith a jest.

---

Night falls on the dying year, its wings
Are heavy with sorrow: the dark sea heaves
With sullen complaint on the shore where springs
No life save of weed the sodden leaves.

Then a whisper, a rift in the pall of cloud,
A murmur and answering call from the sea,

And the hush of despair is ended: aloud
Shouts the wind of the west in its mastery.

Sweep the heavens, O wild west wind, in thy chase
Of the clouds to their lair in the Eastern gloom:
The year is renewed in thy mighty embrace,
Doubt turned to triumph, and God our own.

## AVE ATQUE VALE

IRON and angry red,
The glow of a molten sky:
All men are born
To wrath and scorn:
And then—to die.

Silver and shining grey,
A gleam on the lake's still breast:
From strife comes peace,
From grief, release:
And then—long rest.

Azure and glowing gold,
The rainbow dawn on the height:
The life of man
Lasts a moment's span:
And then—comes light.

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